

JANUARY ARTICLE

CONTACT:

HOW TO HELP MASS SAVE MILLIONS THIS YEAR

Paper is everywhere. It's in the bags that hold your latest shopping finds and the boxes from our online purchases. It's in the cards, letters, and magazines we receive every day, the cup that holds our coffee, the tissue to dry our eyes. Most likely, it's even in your hands as you read this article.

The United States, with less than five percent of the world's population, consumes 30 percent of all paper. The average U.S. office worker uses 10,000 sheets of copy paper each year. According to the American Forest and Paper Association, more than half of the 100 million plus tons of paper consumed every year in this country – or nearly 350 pounds for each man, woman and child – is now recovered for recycling.

In Massachusetts, an estimated 49 percent of used paper was recycled in 2005. Not bad, but there's still more to be done. Each year, Bay State residents and businesses still throw away 1.5 million tons of paper. If we recycle just *half* of the remaining paper out there, we could save nearly \$52 million dollars a year in disposal costs.

You might be wondering why, when we're already recycling half of the paper we no longer need, we should worry about recycling more. Consider these economic and environmental benefits.

- Recyclables are valuable to manufacturers. In 2005, more than 78 percent of the papermakers in this country used at least some recovered fiber to make their products. Recovered paper accounts for more than 37 percent of the raw material used to make new paper products.
- In Massachusetts, the forest products industry is a vital component of the state's economy, employing more than 25,000 workers and paying them more than \$1 billion in salaries and wages. Paper and wood products represent 5.5 percent of the state's total manufacturing work force.
- Recycling helps communities reduce spending on disposal and preserve existing landfill space. When we reduce our disposal, we'll reduce the need for new and expanded solid waste management facilities.
- Recycling paper products reduces energy consumption, decreases combustion and landfill emissions, and decreases the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. When we recycle paper products, trees that would otherwise be harvested are left standing – producing oxygen while absorbing carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas.

Recycling paper is now easier than ever. Gone are the days of removing staples and sorting the different types of paper for recycling. Most local paper recycling programs now accept newspapers, unwanted mail, magazines, envelopes with windows, thin cardboard, office paper and phonebooks all mixed together.

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